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Social Dramas of
Sudermann & Ibsen

GERMAN

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The Social Dramas of Sudermann
compared with those of
Ibsen.

by
Blenda Olson

Thesis for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts
in German
in the
College of Literature and Arts
of the
University of Illinois.
1905.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

May 26, 1905.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

BLENDA OLSON

ENTITLED THE SOCIAL DRAMAS OF SUDERMANN COMPARED WITH
THOSE OF IBSEN.

IS APPROVED BY ME AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF Bachelor of Arts

N. C. Brooks.

Acting HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF German.

Introduction.

1.

It is not our purpose in this comparison to treat the social dramas of Sudermann and Ibsen from every point of view, but to confine ourselves, as far as possible, to their treatment of the various relations of men and women to each other. The books we have studied with this end in view are as follows:

Sudermann

Das Glück im Winkel.

Heimat.

The Joy of Living.

Die Ehre.

Sodom's Ende.

Schmetterlingsnacht.

Ibsen

Peer Gynt.

The Lady of the Sea.

Rosmersholm.

Ghosts.

The Pillars of Society.

Little Eyolf.

A Doll's House.

In the atmosphere of all the above dramas the authors show a general discontent with existing relations between men and women and their attitude towards those social laws which check their natural impulses, and tend to control their actions. It is a discontent with the so-called respectable members of society, for the most part, and not with its dogs. From that class they show dramatic types of individuals, from the highest even to the lowest. Naturally the types are those with whom, for various reasons they take issue, but whose better qualities they are not loath to depict.

The characters that are presented to us in these dramas are confronted with certain problems, moral, ethical or social, which they are called upon to consider. social regulations interfere with their happiness and often with their greatest possibilities, and this because of

some Lucio mistake, or vice for
which they must lay the fault.
Sometimes these regulations interfere
because of certain circumstances
which have brought about a special cas-
e wherein they must work, to deter-
mental in order, to work for the
common good of all. Now for the
two authors agree as to what these
problems are, and the methods of
various types of human beings in
dealing with them, as well as their
effect upon character; we shall see
in what follows.

Das Glück im Himmel.

"Das Glück im Himmel" and "The
Lady from the Sea" have for their
setting, an out of the way place where
a professional man of rather in-
ferior ability lives with his second
wife and the children of his first.

The happiness in each of these homes
is disturbed because the wife has
not yet learned to adapt herself
to her present environment. She

is still affected by experiences which
she saved, involuntarily before her marriage,
and her husband fails to fulfil her
natural requirements for intellectual
companionship. Truly after the
unravelling of the plot does he begin
to stand out as a force in his life,
keeping her in the path of duty.

In each play the former lover
of the wife returns, and before he
leaves, makes it necessary for her
to choose between himself and her
husband. She has not yet escaped
his influence over her and, as long
as she feels herself bound to her present
condition, she struggles and longs
to be freed from it. The husband, fore-
seeing that it would be vain to try to
force her to remain, gives her full liber-
ty to leave. In the few remarks which
follow this formal permission, a new
light seems to break upon her. "Mir
ist's als of wie ich dich heut' ver-
urtheile mal," says Elipheus in Das
Glück im Harnack. "so tenderly have
you come to love me" says Ellida

in The Lady from the sea, "and have been blind to it." And now that they have their freedom they are content to stay.

This is perhaps the most striking parallel which can be formed, in the works of the two authors. So far both seem to depict merely the longing of the woman for freedom, her great difficulty in choosing the best course of action as long as she is bound by social conventionalities or by other circumstances to a certain course.

So far as we have traced the comparison of the Glö, Sundermann seems to have presented his problem in an equally forcible way, to that of Ibsen. The former, to be sure, has treated his subject in a homelier and less poetical and fanciful part.

As a finished product, it is less a work of art than that of Ibsen.

In its force of presentation, however, it is equally strong and he has created more pleasing characters:

though not so imaginative, as
Hidman. Räcknitz and Elizabeth
than either Hangel, the stranger, or
Ellida. It is perhaps in the plot that
Ibsen towers above sundry manner in
the mastery of his presentation. In-
dermann uses the incident of
Helene's engagement to Hangel merely
to throw light upon the character
of Elizabeth, and as an incident
to further the main plot. Ibsen,
on the other hand, shows in Doll's
Story, another phase of the longing
of a woman for a broader life and
knowledge of the world, and an
eagerness to break the barriers which
confiner her to her present home.

He shows the cause of the longing
in the carelessness of her father who
was too much occupied with his
work to look after the needs of his
children, and this shows its results
in Doll's decision to marry a man
for whom she has no love. Merely
what she may satisfy her longings
and not be forever tied up in a room

narrow bounds of her home. Then he leaves us to imagine her fate, which we feel can not be better than a repetition of her longing for freedom, in a more violent way than that which we have seen. Thus, because parents fail in their duties towards their children, the latter are left to make mistakes which will be of life long consequence to them.

Heimat.

To the failure of the father in his duty towards his children, and, indeed, mother, too, has not been thin. In his play "Heimat" he shows Magda, a young girl, thrust out by her parents upon the world, and left to work out her own destiny. Here it is not, as in the former play, the carelessness of the father that is at fault, but his mistake as to what is his duty, a mistake for which he later pays with a broken heart in death. Magda refuses to obey his injunctions to marry Heisterdingk and for that reason she is thrust

away from her home "Eiri pungen
ahungloes Ding war jich" (she
says of herself, "the since Freiheit
geross wir kein losgedrossener Affe".
This "Freiheit" overcomes her and she
finds herself a fallen woman, friend-
less among strangers. Twelve years
later she returns to what was once her
home, a famous singer to whom
friends and noted fair lay tribute.
Now she is a woman of the world
and has breathed the air of freedom
so long that the narrow walls of
her father's home, where she is a
welcome guest, are too narrow and
its domestic atmosphere too oppress-
ive. She wishes at once to go away
again, but yesterday, the pastor
who had loved her and whom she
had refused to marry, seeing the
danger to the health of the father
if she should go so soon, persuades
her to remain a few days. The in-
fluence of his true, unselfish, mo-
th and gentle soul upon the world-
ly Magda is like the warm sunshine

upon a frozen sea, which melts its
rigid body until it responds to
every whispering wind that passes
over its surface and makes pos-
sible the awful storm and ship-
wreck. To be thus moved from her
purpose, by a comparatively insignifi-
cant though true and noble man,
is to her a new experience, and a
great victory for the poor young bar-
row.

A similar effect is made by Man-
dus the parson of "Shosti" when he
persuades Mrs. Alving to go back to
her dissipated husband. Had neither
Magda nor Mrs. Alving heeded the
good and well meant advice of the par-
son, — the tragedy which ends with
Slav of "Heimst" and "Shosti" would
not have been. Her father would
not have learned of Magda's lost in-
nocence and died, broken hearted be-
cause of it; and Oswald would not
have come and the world to suffer
in result of his father's sin.

The Joy of Living.

We come now to another phase of the problem concerning the relations between men and women, between husbands and wives. In Underquarr's "The Joy of Living" and in Leavis' "Roomers" and "Little Egypt" we find three husbands living with their wives in married relation while each enjoys the intellectual companionship of a woman, not his wife. This woman, arouses the best that is in him and urges him on to a life of usefulness. The wife meanwhile has little power over him except that given her by more social habits and customs against which the other woman feels rebellious. Realizing her lack of influence and power over her husband, Rita (Little Egypt) is constantly comparing her position of dependence that takes his attention away from her, even to her own child. Leavis' "Joy of Living" shows her dissatisfaction with social pleasures, and (Beata Roomers

holer) throws herself in despair into
the millrace. The women who have
thus disturbed the happiness of these
homes are the ones with whom the
authors most concern themselves.

Richard and Beata, after giv-
ing themselves over for a brief time to
their passion, have now for twelve
years enjoyed a close and constant
friendship, pure in the eyes of the
law, though prompted by the ardent
love of each for the other. They have
so far as possible, included the count.
Beata's husband, as a third mem-
ber in that friendship, but he is ig-
norant of the true relation between
his wife and Richard. Then at last the
truth is revealed and the letur-
sage comes to an end. Beata gives
up the joy of living which has been
all of life to her, and ends the strug-
gle by taking poison. Thus she saves
her lover to complete the work in
Parliament, the work for which
both have labored and planned so
long and which is to mark a great

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slip in his life of useful activity.

In Parmerholme, Rebecca, his out-
cast, and his wife, as a friend of
the latter, and while there, she decides
that were it not for such a wife, as Beata
Parmer could with her ^{own} help, become
a great and useful man. She loves
him and is eager to become a factor
in his life for developing his best
qualities. Then she sets herself about
to rid herself of Beata by gradually
making her realize herself a hindrance
to him. Little by little she
gains influence over her, until at
last making her believe that she, Re-
becca, is soon to be the mother of Par-
mer's child. She drives the unhappy
Beata into the mill race. Parmer being
the meantime is wholly ignorant of
what is taking place, and he does
not realize that his friendship for
Rebecca is ^{not} real and insincere. They
saw that Parmer would take up a
great and useful work among his
fellow men. In his unconscious sur-
vival and nobility of mind, he influ-

ences Rebecca to such an extent that she is no longer able to surmount the goal for which she has striven. She realizes her debt to him in all its awfulness and William's love has ennobled her to the extent that she is unable to accept his hand when he offers it. He now begins to see that their relation from the first was love, though he did not realize it, and feels as guilty as though his intention had been wicked. "Our bond has been a spiritual marriage," he says, "perhaps from the very first. That is why there is guilt on my soul. I had no right to such happiness. It was a sin against Heata... I can never again rest in that which makes life so marvellously sweet to live. — Peaceful happy innocence." With this his great aspirations leave him and he feels that he cannot carry on the work he started to do. Rebecca, in her desire to prove to him how her love has become purified and ennobled through her dissociation with him, decides to go the way that Heata

went, and Rosmers feeling that nothing is left him now but death, goes with her out into the mill race.

In Little Eyolf, it is the supposed sister of Almer, whose companionship he enjoys far better than that of his wife. They have lived together since early youth, when they were left orphans. And their love for each other was a beautiful thing always. Now he is married to a wealthy woman and can pursue his work upon a book he is writing. He and Asta are still true companions, so much so, that Rita, the wife, sometimes feels jealous of her. By and by it is discovered by Almer and Rita that they are not brother and sister as they had supposed; and then the realization of what might have been, had not Almer been married, comes over them. At first Asta refuses to marry her lover (Drigheim) who has come for her. He has a position far in the north, and he begs her to come with him and be his "whirling companion". Perhaps it

is best that you do not have a travelling companion as yet" Anders tells her. "Because you never can know whom you might possibly meet afterwards - the right travelling companion when it is too late - too late."

Asta, foreseeing the danger of remaining longer, just as Elizabeth had done when she decided to leave the house of Röcknitz, decides, at the last moment to go with Borghejm. Surprised at her sudden change, Anders exclaims "This is like a flight;" and Asta replies: "Yes, Alfred, it is a flight too, a flight from you, and from myself."

If we were to see Anders visiting Cecilia's home a little later, how easily we could imagine another scene similar to "Das Glück im Winter".

In the above plays we see how those who are drawn together by natural affinity are hindered because they have come together too late. Social law and order binds them to unnatural and undesirable relations which tend to ob-

struck their best development and usefulness. Only when they ignore the social regulations do they show the real power latent within them; and yet the necessity of submission to social laws is evident. The count and Beata Warner are the victims whom social law cannot protect because in these special cases, it is in opposition to natural law.

Shall we say, then, that Under-
marr and Ossee would decrie
social law and order, since they
deficit such sad results arising
because of them? Do they justify
Beata, Rebecca and Elizabeth in
their "Entenwürgen"? To be sure, too
they are not responsible for coming
met too late; and since their natural
affinity for each other comes
more or less untidely, they can-
not be blamed for that. One may
marry a person whom he thinks
he loves, and later when the right
person comes, find his mistake.
But it is evident by all the plays

on the subject of both authors that "true happiness cannot be obtained by a breach of those social customs under such circumstances. It is the realization of that fact which brings about such evident restraint on the part of those in the above plays who are thus disappointed.

It is also evident in the plays of the two authors that unhappy results of marriage are often due to the fact that people do not marry from the highest motives. Eliza married, partly, that she might further her literary ambitions, Collette that she might obtain a broader experience and knowledge of the world, and many others married for various similar reasons. Elizabeth had really no right to marry Wickham when her every thought and dream was of Pöcknitz. Social regulations and their deterrent examples exist to prevent such marriages. In order to do so, society must deal harshly with those who defy them by act-

ing in opposition to a natural law,
a law which says a man and woman
shall marry because they love each
other.

Die Ehre.

In "Die Ehre" the story of Anna
compares in a way with that of Jo-
hanna in "Ghosts". Both girls are
led astray by a man from the
upper classes and are given some
money as recompense. Neither is
broken hearted because of her love for
the man, but Johanna turns around
and marries Jacob Engstrand; and
Anna, though she says she loves
Kurt, confesses that she would not
be very badly hurt if she should lose
him. When Mithlitz offers to re-
compense the damage done by Kurt
to the family of Heinecke, the latter
accepts it eagerly. But Jacob Eng-
strand when Johanna offers him
the money she had gotten from
her betrayer, says "I would have
nothing to do with it. That's man-
mon, that's the wages of sin. 20

Johanna and I, we agreed that "that money should go to the child's education, and so it did; and I can account for every penny of it." Thus we see in Isene's treatment of Gustav a higher conception of the common folk than is expressed by Gudrun in the family of Heinicke, where not a single worthy principle is shown in any one (except Robert, who really no longer belongs to them). We see however in Robert the possibility of growth and development when advantages are at hand; for these poor, such as Isene perhaps, does not consider possible for he grows up in Pegnia, an offspring of poverty and sin, as substitute of higher principles as the Heinicke's, although her advantages were as good as those of Robert.

The final in denoting the same rebellious attitude of the woman against her exclusion from the vital care and responsibilities of the household affairs, that is shown

ly Nora of the Dolls House. He
see also the same ability to stand out
against those who tries attempt to ex-
clude her, when her time for action
comes. These both authors agree that
women should not be treated as
children, but as individuals hav-
ing their share and responsibility
in the progress of the world about
them. As soon as Ellida was given
the responsibility and the liberty
of going with the stranger, she was
able to decide at once upon the
best course for action.

Sodom's Ende.

The most shocking of Sudermann's
dramas, and one that bears little re-
semblance to the dramas of Ibsen
is "Sodom's Ende". It revolves about
the character of Willy Janikow, a
young artist of genius, and shows
how a wicked woman may weaken
a character, and utterly destroy its
brilliant future prospects. He shows
perhaps, the lack of restraint in the
temperament of the genius, and

his weakness in resisting tempta-
tion. He is a great favorite with
those about him, especially with
the women and therefore his tempt-
ations are greater. The same char-
acteristics can be traced in the wild
escapades of Peer Gynt who also
bears the marks of a genius. Both
lack force of character; are irresist-
ible to all the women they meet,
and yield to their weak natures,
dragging one after another with
them to destruction. When Peer Gynt's
mother sees him creeping up the
mountain with his neighbors hide
she exclaims in desperation "Would
that he might fall and, -". Then she
screams in terror, "Take care of
your footing, Peer!"

In a like manner though in
a sadder scene, Kärchen's lover,
when he fears of Hilmy's quilt runs
about the room exclaiming "Ne
Hafte! ne Hafte!" and seizing a
club from the wall is about to
strike him when the boy falls

over as if dead. Forgetting his anger
he at once seeks to prove him.

Johannistener.

In Johannistener we find Marik-
ka, a Lithuanian foundling, reared
in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Vogel-
reuter, under whose parental care
she has grown to womanhood. To show
her appreciation of her home she
makes herself so helpful and kind
about the house, that she is a daily
blessing to her benefactors. Georg von
Hortwig, a nephew of Vogelreuter, al-
so lives in the family and as he
grows up, he learns to love Marik-
ka. Because of her birth she dares
not believe in the sincerity of Georg's
love. She misinterprets his attentions,
and though she loves him discour-
ages all his advances. He considers
himself rejected, and later wins
the young daughter of the house.
Fred., who loves him with all the
ardor of a maiden's first love.

Marikka, while Fred. is preparing
the new home for the prospective

bride, finds a note book from which she learns of the real love of Georg for herself. In the evening of the "Johannisfeier," the two stand together and reveal their love for each other, but decide to fear their fate as best they can. Their duties towards those who have befriended them make it necessary that they restrain their feelings. Before they fall asleep, however, they find themselves in each other's arms and he is kissing her passionately. "Du, küsse mich nicht," she says, "Ich will dich küssen. Ich will fallen und mich nehmen. Mein Mutter standt. Ich stelle auch." Thus she shows as does Regina how the moral tendencies of parents have an influence upon the children. Another example shows how in spite of good training and her excellent effort to be worthy of better things, the outcast mother's degradation would express itself through her. She proposed to Georg to run away with her unconsciously

just before the wedding - to steal a kiss.
Georgi however proposes to confess his
situation to his uncle and demand
release from his engagement. Here
Marikka's letter self is asserted. She
is the first to see that happiness
thus obtained would be selfish
and not lasting. So they decide to
say farewell forever. Here we are
again reminded of Alfred and
Pitā, and we are obliged to see
in Georgi's marriage a situation
similar to that of Pitā and Al-
fred.

The relations between Marikka
and the young minister Hakke
are similar to those of Magda and
Hefterdingh, or of Mrs. Claudio in
"Erosé" and Pastor's Mauderé. Hakke
is a character of less force, perhaps
than the others, but he is beautiful
and pure in his ideals, and very
selfish in his devotion to Marikka.
When he finds that she is lost to
him, he asks her no embarrass-
ing questions, but seeks to dissuade

her from doing wrong for her own
sake. "Sehen Sie" he says to her "mein
Lebensglück das haben Sie mir heute
zu schande gemacht, aber meine Zu-
kunftsmelodie, die können Sie mir
nicht nehmen, aber Heiraten
hates Heiraten wenn Sie dies Haus
denn Sie alles auf der Welt ver-
danken wenn Sie das mit Kum-
mer erfüllen, wenn Sie sich an
ihren Vater und Mutter verwei-
gen" - that indeed is what he cannot
bear to have her do. Because he loves
her.

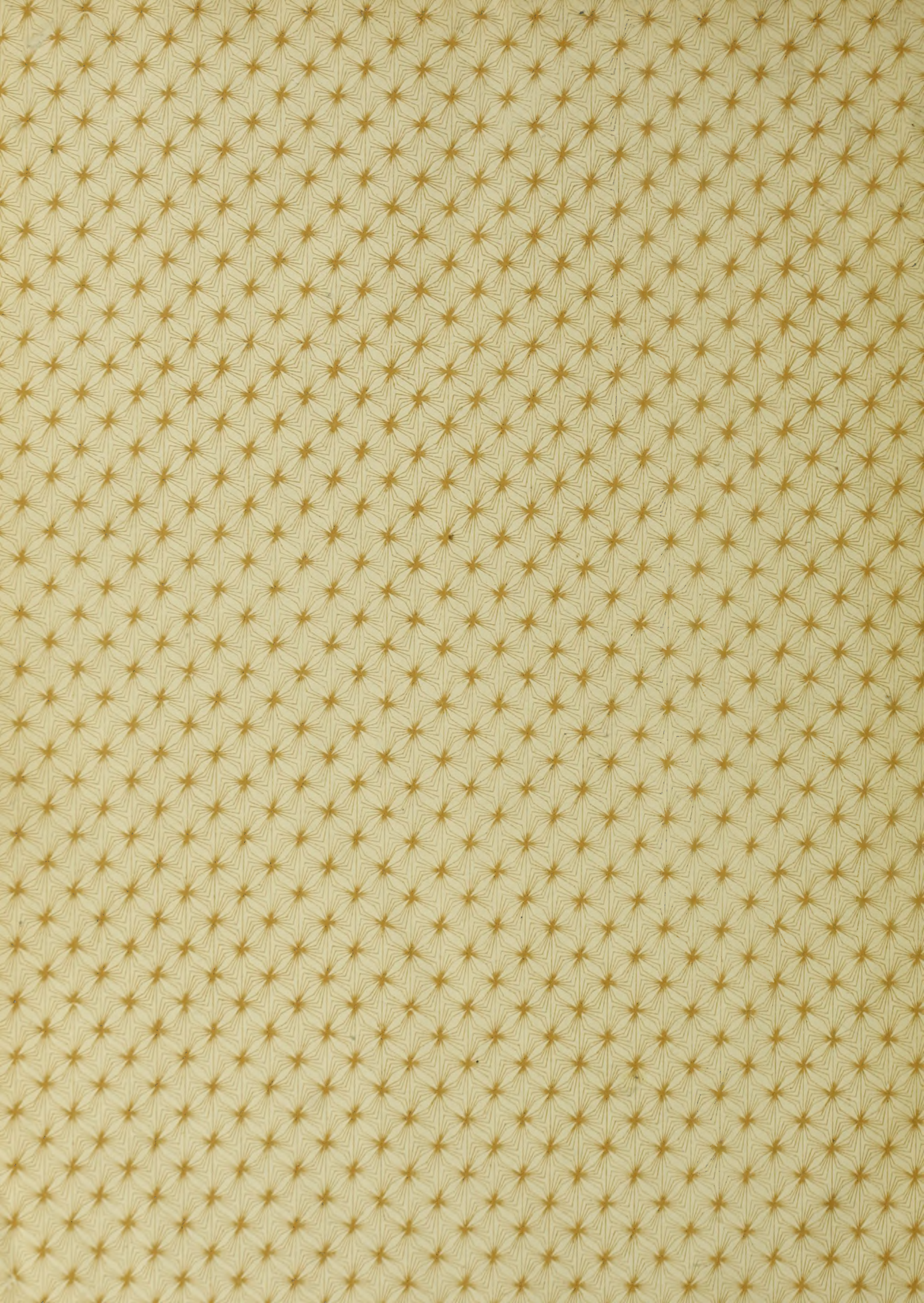
Schmetterlingsnacht.

The last play we have to consider
seems to have no parallel in Ibsen's
works. It is a comedy based upon
the vain and shallow ambitions of
a poor family to attain position
and wealth by means of the per-
sonal charm of the daughter. It
is a sort of a "get rich quick" scheme
by means of marriage which under-
lies the satire in this play.

Frau Hergenhain has three fair

daughter is any of whom she is anxious
to marry off to a man of fortune.
She has tried and sacrificed long
years in order to give her daughter
the best advantages possible; and
now all are eagerly waiting for
the well earned reward. The rich
marriage would relieve the whole
family of its financial embarrass-
ment, and it surely cannot be far
off, for both the older girls are beau-
tiful, and well behaved, and (best
of all) the youngest, needs only a few years
of development before she will be
as attractive as the others. She is
an unselfish young idealist who
never thinks first of her own future
but merely of helping the other girls
in their personal or a victim.
Then she finds, as she thinks, that
Else and Trevor love each other,
she is so sure to marry Max, never
either shall love Else and Trevor.
Max is the rich young man to
whom Else became engaged in
the course of the play, but before

the close he discovers her unworthi-²⁷-
ness, and gives her up. An affection
soon grows up between Max and
Rosa which ends in the happy
union of the two, the plans of
the others having all been thwart-
ed.





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